A Proposal for an Art Exhibit

1. General Information

1.1 Exhibit Title:	Three Contemporary Miltonists
	Arts and Letters Exhibit
1.2 Date:	November 2026, commemorative of Dr. R.J. Wickenheiser's DOD
	Or earlier
1.3 Venue:	University of South Carolina
	South Carolina, U.S.A.
1.4 Featured Artists:	Terrance Lindall and Bienvenido Bones Banez, Jr., with Dr. R.J. Wickenheiser
1.4 Submitted to:	Ms. Elizabeth Sudduth
	Associate Dean for Special Collections
	University of South Carolina Libraries
1.5 Written by:	Phillip Somozo (for Bienvenido Bones Banez, Jr.)

2. Background

The classic epic poem Paradise Lost by John Milton has grown with universal significance in today's world and is expected to grow with even more into the future.

Doctor Robert J. Wickenheiser (died 2015) is the collector of probably one of the world's largest Miltoniana housed in the Irvin Department of Special Collections of the University of South Carolina Library. In a lecture at the Williamsburg Art and Historical Center in New York in 2012, Dr. Wickenheiser described Terrance Lindall as the contemporary world's foremost illustrator of Paradise Lost (Attachment 1).

Lindall's Milton-related masterpieces include The Paradise Lost Elephant Folio, a hand-embellished synopsis of the epic poem. It is a monumental work of art presented to the public on the day of Wickenheiser's lecture (Attachment 2). As a gesture of deep appreciation and friendship, Wickenheiser purchased one of only two copies of the tome for his collection. The other remained in the WAH Center in Brooklyn, NY, of which Lindall is the Executive Director. After the abovementioned lecture, Lindall introduced to

Wickenheiser a surrealist artist whose PL illustration was used as one of the visual aids in the lecture (Attachment 3). His name: Bienvenido Bones Banez, Jr.

Banez, from the Philippines, had come to New York after spending two months of artist residency at the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, VT. He had earlier won the Freeman Asian painting competition of the said international artists' community regarded as America's largest. His chief mentor in the Fine Arts college in his home country was the late Filipino National Artist Victor Edades.

It is in the WAH Center that the artistic talents of Lindall and Banez reached a conjunction during an art exhibition aptly titled Brave Destiny (2003) curated by the former. Looking at Banez's displayed work, My Warlock Dream 666 (Attachment 4), Lindall exclaimed "Banez is the greatest surrealist artist from the Philippines!" In no time the two became good friends. Despite Banez's stuttering speech born of a mild childhood autism, his manner of comprehension is intensely-focused. The two are able to communicate and share each other's view of the complexity and depth of Paradise Lost.

Apparently, Lindall had earlier mentioned Banez to Wickenheiser in 2011 as can be gleaned from the book The Milton Projects that he co-authored with the latter (Attachment 5). "I call his art Fiero-electric... the color of hellfire." His creativity is like "plugged in a socket," Lindall told Wickenheiser. In the same breath, he admits to have gained insight from the Filipino surreal artist's statement "Satan gave color to the world" that to him is "insightful and original." It could have been such a dreary and boring world had not Satan tempted Adam and Eve; because of the fall from Eden humanity learned to pursue the arts, Lindall adds. For their "affinity and absolute parallelism," he honors Bones (as he calls Banez) with a place in the elephant folio. Particularly, Banez's name is painted by Lindall below the artist's palette at the upper border of the Pandemonium page (Attachment 6).

In his reply, Wickenheiser commissioned Banez to paint a PL illustration for his collection (Attachment 7). A subsequent email, dated March 11, 2013, addressed to both Lindall and Banez, Wickenheiser expressed his plan to exhibit the addendums to his collection by 2015 and his wish to see both PL artists "soon". In his conclusion he disclosed a recurring spinal illness he was suffering from (Attachment 8). It is quite touching to know that Dr. Robert J. Wickenheiser eventually died of the illness in 2015.

Nevertheless, Banez did, not one, but three PL canvases all of which were purchased by Wickenheiser and were included in the latter's Milton Collection at the University of South Carolina. A portrait of Wickenheiser was also painted by Banez and is presently in the WAH Center At this point, Professor Horace Jeffrey Hodges, another associate, who describes himself as the Gypsy Scholar in his blog, dubbed the triumvirate as "The Three Miltonists" (Attachment 9).

Wickenheiser assured Lindall and Banez that their works will update the catalog of The Robert J. Wickenheiser Collection of John Milton at the University of South Carolina. Adding credence to his assurance is a current (2012) copy of the catalog that he gave to Banez (Attachment 10). It is here that your (PL) illustrations will be recorded, he conveyed to Banez.

Unfortunately, Dr. Wickenheiser left this world in 2015. His legacy though lives on. Terrance Lindall, too, is not getting younger at eighty years old and Banez is now sixty-three. It is for these three contemporary Miltonist giants (Attachment 11) that this tribute of an art exhibit is conceptualized.

3. Project Objective

To present to the public the monumental work of The Three Miltonists as milestone documentation of John Milton's Paradise Lost.

4. Project Description

The Three Miltonists Art and Letters Exhibit is originally conceptualized as solo show by Banez as a Paradise Lost documentary project. It is improved and expanded to include Wickenheiser and Lindall after this author reviewed the background narrative (communications, write-ups, and blogs) provided by Banez, with his approval and to his delight.

The exhibit roles of the three featured Miltonists are broken down as follows:

4.1 Dr. Robert J. Wickenheiser

On behalf of Dr. Wickenheiser, the USC Special Collections Library shall ensure the updating of the Wickenheiser catalog book and place it as one of the three major exhibit materials.

This author saw only the catalog's photo but judging by its size and having read a comment from a scholar, I have the understanding the Wickenheiser catalog book includes narratives by its author on how he formed his Miltoniana through the years. On the physical absence of the deceased Wickenheiser, relevant excerpts of his abovementioned lecture and the subsequent communications he had with Lindall and Banez can serve as the narrative for the addendum artworks of Lindall and Banez. The aforementioned excerpt(s) and communications shall also be printed and displayed as wall texts during the exhibition proper.

4.2 Terrance Lindall

The Paradise Lost Elephant Folio by Terrance Lindall shall also be a major exhibit material along with two others, i.e. The Robert J. Wickenheiser Collection of John Milton and the portrait of The Three Miltonists by Bienvenido Bones Banez, Jr.

Lindall shall be the central figure during the opening program by giving a talk on "The Perfect Grace of God," which is his philosophical conclusion of Paradise Lost. If he so desires, he may act either as exhibit curator or consultant. Considering his age and possible health challenges, he may deliver his talk through recorded video, or by live streaming from the WAH Center.

Lindall also has the option of exhibiting his other Paradise Lost illustrations.

4.3 Bienvenido Bones Banez, Jr.

Understandably, the three PL paintings of Banez already in the Wickenheiser collection shall be displayed, being part of the addendum to the catalog.

Banez is in the process of painting the portrait The Three Miltonists in his Fiero-electric style. The canvas, as mentioned earlier, shall be one of the three major exhibit materials. He will donate the painting to the Wickenheiser Milton collection, thus, shall also be housed in the USC Library of Special Collections.

Aside from The Three Miltonists portrait, Banez is also working on two other Paradise Lost color illustrations for the exhibit. These last two canvases are meant for selling. Therefore, Banez's total artwork display is six (6) PL paintings. He said he can do more if need be.

5. Historical Perspective

Whoever shall be the curator, s/he may achieve a deeper historical perspective and comparative study by displaying Paradise Lost illustrations by William Blake and Gustave Dore, original or reproduction, in chronological order with those of Terrance Lindall and Banez. This author is aware Terrance Lindall is the contemporary world's organizer of the biggest and grandest John Milton event, i.e. The Grand Paradise Lost Costume Ball in celebration of the great poet's 400th birth anniversary.

6. Event Organizer

The University of South Carolina Library shall serve as exhibit organizer and, understandably, responsible for fund sourcing and management. Should Lindall refuse to curate the show, the USCL, being the organizer, shall assign one, and has the right to innovate or improve this proposed concept. Where there is a gray area relative to the implementation of this proposed exhibit project, Terrance Lindall and Bienvenido Banez, Jr., shall be consulted for clarification.

Respectfully prepared and submitted by

PHILLIP SOMOZO

Conforme:

BIENVENIDO BONES BANEZ, JR.